

S.94

An act relating to licensing state forest land for maple sugar production

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 2606b is added to read:

§ 2606b. LICENSE OF FOREST LANDS FOR MAPLE SUGAR

PRODUCTION

(a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(1) Maple sugaring is an important cultural tradition of Vermont life that should be maintained and encouraged.

(2) Maple sugaring is an important component of the agricultural and forest products economy in Vermont and is increasingly necessary for farmers that must diversify in order to continue to farm in Vermont.

(3) Maple sugaring is a sustainable use of forest land.

(4) State forest land should be managed and used for multiple uses including maple sugar production.

(5) It is hereby adopted as state policy to permit limited use of designated state-owned land under the jurisdiction of the department for maple sugar production.

(b) Beginning on July 1, 2009, pursuant to guidelines developed jointly by the department of forests, parks and recreation and the Vermont maple sugar

makers' association, the department shall issue licenses for the use of state forest land for the tapping of maple trees, the collection of maple sap, and the transportation of such sap to a processing site located off state forest land or to sites located on state forest land if approved by the commissioner. All tapping of maple trees authorized under a license shall be conducted according to the guidelines for tapping maple trees agreed to by the department and the Vermont maple sugar makers' association. Each person awarded a license under this section shall maintain and repair any road, water crossing, or work area according to requirements set by the department in the license. Each license shall include such additional terms and conditions set by the department as may be necessary to preserve forest health and to assure compliance with the requirements of this chapter and applicable rules. A license shall be issued for a fixed term not to exceed five years and shall be renewable for two five-year terms subsequent to the initial license. Subsequent renewals shall be allowed where agreed upon by the department and the licensee. The department shall have power to terminate or modify a license for cause, including damage to forest health.

(c) The commissioner may adopt rules to implement the requirements of this section.

(d) There is hereby established a maple advisory board to provide the commissioner of forests, parks and recreation with guidance on licensing of

state forest land for maple sugar production, including identification of potential sites on state lands for licensure. The board shall be composed of:

(1) Three employees of the department of forests, parks and recreation, appointed by the commissioner.

(2) Three sugar makers, at least one of which is an independent sugar maker unaffiliated with an association, appointed by the secretary of agriculture, food and markets.

(3) One member of the Vermont forest products association designated by the association.

(4) One member of either the University of Vermont Proctor maple research center or the University of Vermont agricultural extension service, appointed by the commissioner.

(e) There shall be an annual license fee imposed based on the number of taps installed in the license area. The per tap fee for a license issued under this section shall be one-quarter of the average of the per pound price of Vermont fancy grade syrup and the per pound price of Vermont commercial grade syrup as those prices are set on May 1 of each year. The fee set each May 1 shall apply to licenses issued by the department for the succeeding period beginning June 1 and ending May 31. Fees collected under this section shall be deposited in the forest parks revolving fund established under 10 V.S.A. § 2609 and shall

be used by the department to implement the license program established by this section.

(f) On or before January 15, 2010, the commissioner of forests, parks and recreation shall submit to the senate and house committees on natural resources and energy and the senate and house committees on agriculture a report regarding the implementation of the requirements of this section. The report shall include:

(1) A copy of the guidelines required by this section for issuing licenses for the use of state forest land for maple sap collection and production.

(2) A summary of the process used to identify parcels of state forest land suitable for licensing for maple sap collection and production and the process by which the department allocated licenses.

(3) A summary of the licenses issued for maple sap collection and production on state forest land.

(4) An estimate of the fees collected for licenses issued under this section.

(5) A copy of any rules adopted by or proposed for adoption by the commissioner to implement the requirements of this section.